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Volume 37 | Number 8

Article 2

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1957

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Jean Hansen

*Iowa State College*

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### Recommended Citation

Hansen, Jean (1957) "The Role of Woman," *The Iowa Homemaker*: Vol. 37 : No. 8 , Article 2.

Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol37/iss8/2>

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# The Role of Woman

By Jean Hansen

Department of  
Child Development

THE EXPANDING role of woman in today's society has been ably described from different perspectives. Ann Lindberg wrote beautifully, almost poetically, in "Gifts from the Sea;" James Thurber handled the question humourously in writing and cartoon; Ashley Montague attempted a scientific approach in his "Natural Superiority of Women." Current magazine articles take a dim view of "man's diminishing role," supporting the arguments from such imposing sources as Margaret Mead, anthropologist; David Reisman, social-scientist; Alfred Kinsey, identification unnecessary; and Milton Senn, Director of Yale Child Study Center.

The implied charges are not new. Sociologists have written of the matriarchal suburban families. Educators have deplored the female domination of the young boy at home and school. Child Development is concerned in regard to male role identification. The shift has been insidious and women themselves have ambivalent feelings about the results. Women have already discovered with varying degrees of reluctance that everything comes at a price, and that we lost something of value as we gained our equality with men. *Even so, equality is fine; and equal opportunity for woman to develop her potential in various fields has been, and continues to be, challenging and worth the sacrifice.*

But just as in our striving for the democratic family,

we over shot the mark a bit and had many child-ruled rather than democratic families, so we may be in danger of having not equality but a woman dominated society. Woman's unaccounted for longevity casts extra weight in this direction. This also results in a great deal of the country's wealth residing in the hands of widows. It also means tremendous voting power.

The roles of men and women become extremely confused. Women have not only invaded many previously exclusively male roles, but have themselves insisted that men share in those tasks which used to be "women's work" until only child-bearing, due to biological complications, remains exclusively the woman's role. Perhaps the national preference for westerns on television is an unconscious nostalgia for role clarification. Just as real, though not as clear cut, are the pressures applied by wives for material goods and extra services which keep many male noses so close to the grindstone that they are seldom seen at home.

The price for a woman dominated society might be one we would be loathe to pay. At least it merits careful consideration. Perhaps we only want to be judged on our own merits as individuals rather than woman versus man. We need to take a long clear look at the situation. Certainly it is up to us to do something constructive with the power we now have.